



HEARTENING THE SUPERINTENDENT

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HE superintendent was a tall, thin young man, with slightly stooping shoulders and near-sighted eyes which peered keenly through the heavy lenses of his eyeglasses. "Our Mr. Crawford," as he was always called by the general manager of the Perfection Electric Switch Company, had been transferred from his place as foreman of the wiring department to be superintendent of the factory at a time when an iron hand was needed to remedy the mischief which the lax methods and general inefficiency of his departing predecessor had created.

It was a difficult problem of reorganization that he had been called upon to face, but time had proved that the general manager's faith—he had stoutly advocated Crawford against the firm's opposition—had not been misplaced. The new superintendent had entered upon his duties quietly, unassumingly, but with a tenacity of purpose and an unrelenting energy that bent all things to his will. Three of the best years of his life he gave unhesitatingly and uncomplainingly to the work before him. At the end of that time the factory was running with a smoothness that took several wrinkles out of the general manager's brow and made the firm think seriously of increasing the plant.

"Our Mr. Crawford"—the firm spoke of him proudly in this manner now—had made himself necessary to

roundly and pressed about him to shake his hand. Powell had undoubtedly been popular with his employees, but his popularity had been gained at the expense of results in the output of the factory.

Under the new superintendent the output was satisfactory—and more. The question that continually presented itself to the young man's troubled mind was whether, in the interests of the firm he had not been too harsh with the employees. In eradicating the evils Jim Powell had wrought he had found it necessary to calculate in cold-blooded fashion, to be ready with blame and chary of praise. The result was inevitable. While the profits grew steadily Crawford realized that it was because of his ceaseless vigilance and the firmness with which he held the employees at work.

There were times—when he was tired, especially—when it seemed to him that he had merely developed into a successful slave driver.

Sometimes at 6 o'clock, when the big gong had sounded, he would sit by the time-machine and watch the men file down the stairs. He would have given much if here and there in the long line a face had been lifted to his with a nod or a comprehending smile, but the "hands" rang in their time in sullen silence. His very presence seemed to chill their spirits, and when one of them looked at him it was either with bitterness or a blank stare.

Meanwhile the Perfection Electric Switch Company prospered amazingly, and at the same time the superintendent grew a little more stooped, a little more reserved, a little more heavy of eye.

In November of the third year it happened that "Our Mr. Crawford" was taken sick. At the time he was putting forth strenuous efforts to have an increase of pay for the employees, in consequence of which he was at the office several days when he should have been in bed. He wanted the hands to understand that their work had been appreciated, and although he had to grind his teeth to keep from crying out with the pain he went daily to the office and argued with the general manager and the members of the firm.

The firm was obdurate. It was decided finally that, in view of the extensive additions that were to be made to the plant the increase could not be granted for another year. Sick at heart and racked with pain the superintendent staggered to his apartments in the gray November dusk, went to bed and sent for a doctor. The physician came, chided the young man for his carelessness of his health and said a slight operation would be necessary the next day.

The operation was successful, and the physician assured the anxious general manager that the patient would be at the factory in a couple of weeks. But the physician had not reckoned on many things—the weariness of mind and body in his patient, the bitterness of his recent failure to induce the firm to increase the pay of the hands, and the dragging load under which he had struggled silently for the past three years.

The wound caused by the operation healed rapidly, but with the healing came no strength. Crawford sat daily propped up in a chair by the window, listless and uninterested in

his surroundings. The physician was puzzled and not a little irritated; the general manager, who came daily, began to show signs of alarm.

"It's the pace of modern business, sir!" the physician snapped angrily to the attendant, who had been sent up from the hospital. "Get him interested in something. It's his only chance."

The man tried everything his fertile mind and thorough training could suggest, but with no results. Crawford sat silently by the window day after day, looking vacantly at the bare branches of the trees and the patches of dull cloud drifting across the early winter sky.

Christmas time found Crawford propped in his chair, looking out over a world newly swathed in spotless white. The doctor declared that now it was only a question of time, and the attendant had long since ceased trying to rouse the sick man's dormant interest. On Christmas Day Crawford opened an envelope from the factory and found it enclosed a substantial check. He smiled bitterly and handed it to the attendant.

"Here, take it! Merry Christmas!" he said, in a colorless voice.

At dusk it was snowing again, and just after the lights began to twinkle through the gloom Crawford, in his chair, fell into a heavy slumber. He was awakened by a lusty rapping at the door. The attendant went into the little hall and presently returned.

"Two ladies and three gentlemen to see you, sir," he said.

The visitors were ushered in, and as they entered the room Crawford gripped the arms of his chair and stared with wide opened eyes. There were two giggling girls from the wiring department at the factory, two men from the assembling bench and the foreman of the brass room.

The girls giggled and the men looked ill at ease. Crawford sat up in his chair. Two spots of color came into his wan cheeks. The foreman advanced and cleared his throat.

"We've come, sir," he said, looking at the ceiling, "to show you that, even if you're not with us, you're not forgotten. Perhaps we haven't always understood you, but anyway we know you're the right sort. We've heard all about your fight for an increase for us, and even if we didn't get it, we know it wasn't because you did not do your best for us. So to show our respect for you and your efforts in our behalf we've brought you this." He tore the covering from a parcel, bore and held out a silk umbrella with a large pearl and silver handle. "And—Merry Christmas!" he finished.

"Merry Christmas!" echoed the two other men and the two girls.

A lump rose in Crawford's throat. He could only beam upon them and mutter feebly, "Merry Christmas to you!"

Some few minutes after the committee from the factory had gone the doctor came bustling into the hall. The attendant met him and shook a warning finger at him. The doctor craned his neck and peeped cautiously into the room.

Crawford sat under the light. His head was hidden in the crook of one arm that rested on the window sill. Clutched tightly in the other was a silk umbrella with a large pearl and silver handle. Crawford's shoulders rose and fell convulsively; he was sobbing like a child.

The doctor smiled in comprehension. "Good!" he declared, emphatically. "That's something like!"

And turning on his heel he stole softly down the stairs.—From Youth's Companion.

They Sleep Head Downward.

The butterfly, like the bat, invariably goes to sleep head downward, its eyes looking straight down the stem of the grass on which it rests. It folds its wings to the utmost, and thus wraps its body from the cold.—Home Notes.

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Crawford's Shoulders Rose and Fell Convulsively.

the Perfection Electric Switch Company, but his success had not been entirely satisfactory to himself. With all his quiet force, the superintendent was a very human young man. He had hoped to gain the complete confidence of the men and women under him. It was respect he wanted rather than fear.

The lax, easy going regime of the former superintendent had made that careless individual very popular with the factory hands. They had given him all sorts of presents on his birthdays and at Christmas time. The day his "resignation"—oh, euphonic term!—had gone into effect they had presented him with an orifate watch charm, and when, red in the face and embarrassed he had tried to stammer his thanks, they had cheered him